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## SHALL OUR ROOMS BE ARTISTIC OR STYLISH ?

BY CLARENCE COOK

*Illustrated from photographs of studios of prominent artists.*

THE artist has many advantages to balance the disadvantages of his life, always a precarious one in a world that really cares but little for the esthetic side of things. He can cover the walls to his mind with his own pictures and sketches, and those of his brother-artists; and at the same time he can supplement the deficiencies in this improvised tapestry by bits of oriental stuffs; or by rugs, still pleasant to the eye though past service on the floor; or by squares of old Spanish leather whose softened tints of greenish bronze make an effective background for the tarnished gold of a mirror-frame or the dull ivory of a cast treated with oil and wax. For, after all, it must be understood that there are two opposite ways of looking at this matter of furnishing. There is what is called, and properly, the artistic way, and there is the conventional way, that is the usual, the almost universal way. The artist who is really an artist, not merely one by profession, fits up his rooms instinctively in a way that at once feeds his artistic sense, and reflects his artistic character. He must have things about him that keep his artistic senses keyed-up and serve as a standard by which he can judge his own performance.

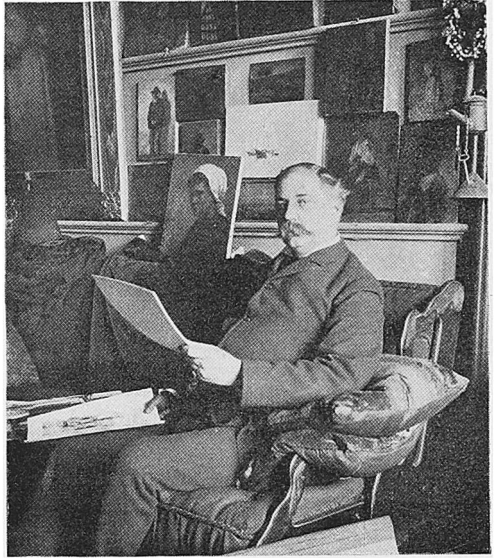
Looked at with the eye of reason these things are really tools of his trade; but while he acknowledges this, he has another and a very different reason for surround-



PORTRAIT AND STUDIO OF THOMAS W. WOOD

ing himself with them. They are, he would say, essential to his life as an artist. It may almost be said that if his room had nothing in it, the way that "nothing" was arranged would show that the room belonged to an artist. When in London, I visited Mr. Whistler in his house at Chelsea, and was received in a room that had nothing in it but a settle (designed by himself) of painted wood without cushions, and one chair or perhaps two. The wall, brought to a single tint, was hung with a few Japanese kakemonos—then a new thing. There were no ornaments, no pictures, no bric-à-brac; I think there was no carpet, but it is very likely there was a matting. Now anyone, competent to judge, would have known that only a

man of naturally a sensitive taste, refined by constant companionship with beautiful things, could have made that room so delightful as it was at once to the eye and the mind. Apropos of this allusion to Mr. Whistler's house, I may repeat his reply



PORTRAIT OF WALTER SATTERLEE

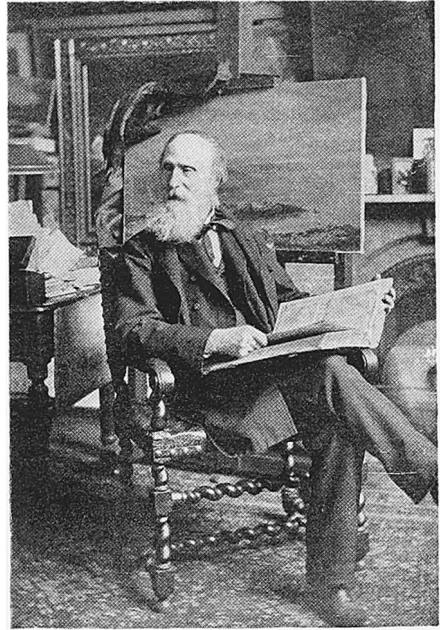


THE STUDIO OF WALTER SATTERLEE

to the lady who asked him, when stress of weather once had obliged him to part with all his furniture: "What will you furnish your house with, now, Mr. Whistler?" "With space, Madam!" said the artist.

But I do not mean to give the notion that Mr. Whistler is such a devotee of simplicity as to be content forever with a room so sparsely furnished as the one I have described; that was only what an artist would call the first laying-in of a room. No doubt he made additions to this room, of great beauty; his collection of blue china—blue pots, as the English, with their love of saying less in commendation than the law allows, call them—was reckoned among the best in England; but my point is, that artistic taste and feeling will make themselves felt in a slenderly furnished room as clearly as in a richly furnished one.

Now there is not much use in preaching this gospel to the ordinary man, much less



PORTRAIT OF DANIEL HUNTINGTON

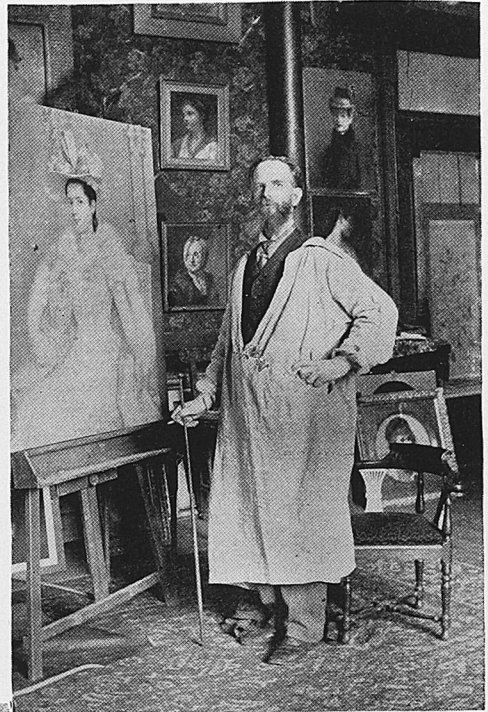


THE STUDIO OF DANIEL HUNTINGTON



to the ordinary woman, because the taste of the general public is for what is going, not for what is gone; they enjoy being in the swim, and we might as well try to make a woman approve a bonnet that was radically different from the bonnet other women were wearing, as to try to make her furnish her house artistically when other women are furnishing theirs fashionably.

What no woman can bear is, to have her taste called "queer." She may show good taste up to a certain point in her way of using the prevailing mode, but you cannot get her to discard that mode for another. Now the artist and the artistic person care not a rush for any mode or fashion whatever. They think, even if they do not say it, with Henry V to the Princess Katharine: "We are the makers of manners!" And that, I maintain, is the



PORTRAIT OF J. WELLS CHAMPNEY



PORTRAIT OF J. C. NICOLL

true attitude, and the one required.

In Thomas W. Wood's studio, as here portrayed, the only picturesque feature is the amiable artist himself, who, in velvet coat and beretta, plays the part of Rembrandt as a make-weight to the not very interesting contents of his painting-room. Mr. Wood can at any rate say: "I am a maker of pictures, not a room-decorator, and you see me here in the midst of the products of my industry." This is a healthy, honest attitude, and many an artist of high attainments will be found to stand on the same ground.

Walter Satterlee, on the other hand, has a liking for a little more picturesqueness. He has an eye for draperies, tiger-skins and bear-skins, bits of odd carving, pieces of armor; and has known how to put to decorative use the glass balls used by fishermen as floats for their nets. The

fashionable beauties who throng Mr. Satterlee's studio on "visiting days," go into pretty thrills of delight over these globes shining in prismatic light through the coarse netting. But fancy their looks of arch surprise, should the artist propose their trying the effect of such a thing in their own silken drawing-rooms.

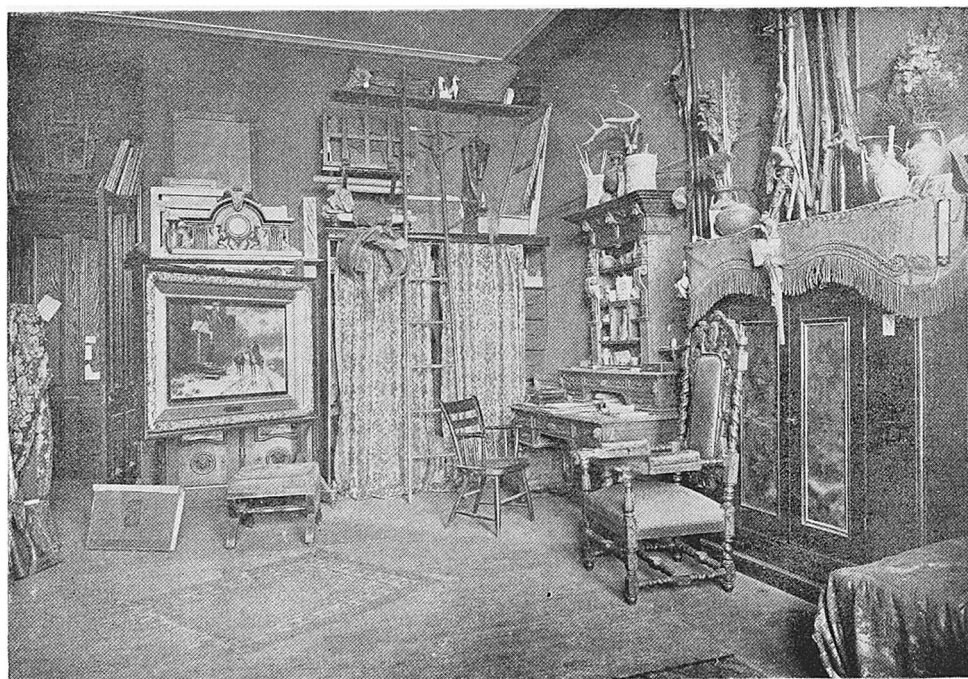
I am very far from finding fault with this; things ought to hang together and to follow the law of suitability. And, in fact, I am writing now only for those who are artistically inclined, and who are free to follow their inclinations.

Mr. Huntington, it will be seen, relies almost entirely on his own paintings for the decoration of his studio, if, indeed, he thinks of the decorative side at all; and it is not to be denied that his pictures have a conventional richness of coloring that makes them more useful on the decorative side than most of the portraiture of the day.

The glimpses of the studios of J. C. Nicoll and J. Wells Champney furnish.



PORTRAIT OF WORDSWORTH THOMPSON



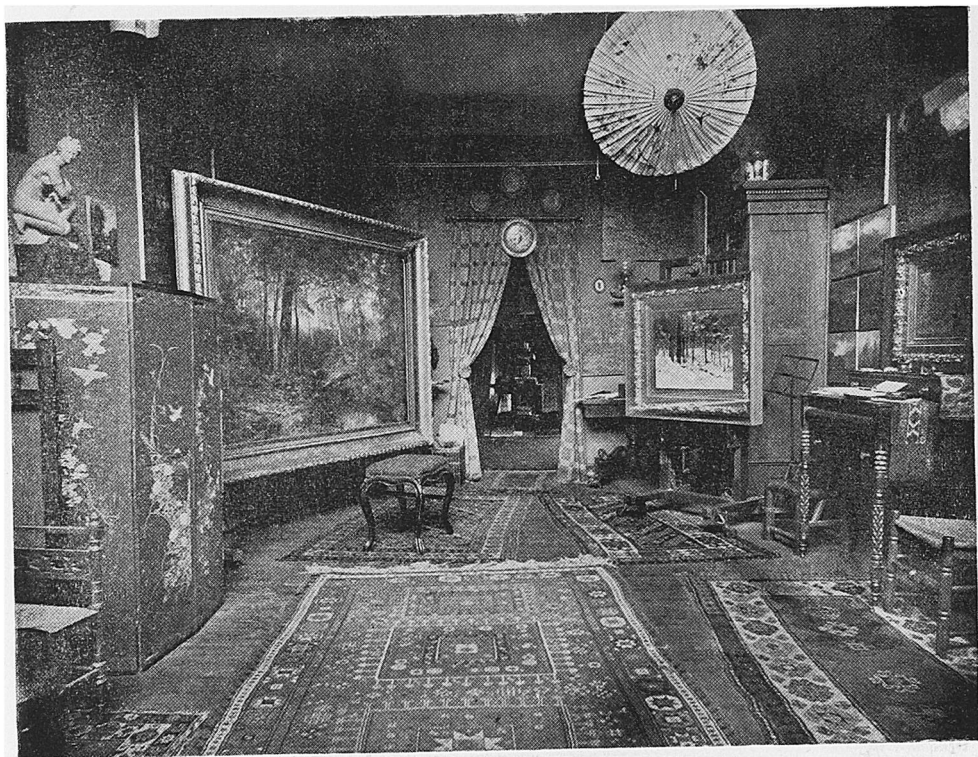
THE STUDIO OF WORDSWORTH THOMPSON

few bases for comment on their decorative possibilities. Mr. Champney's clever copies of one or two old French pastels set off his own modern canvases, and his French artist's blouse reveals enough of the dress required of us all as reassures us against a too imminent tumble into Bohemianism.

Wordsworth Thompson is as matter of fact and sensible in his studio-fittings as he is in his pictures; and with his lambrequins and his thermometer seems to defy the advances of anything that may come with a nonchalant picturesqueness, asking for admission on the ground that an artist's studio owed it shelter. Nor does Mr. Shurtleff's room help us much more, though I think there is something to be learned from the way in which, as seen, we can get from rugs the effect of a floor well covered, without the formality of covering it all over. This is another case where a part is better than the whole.



PORTRAIT OF R. M. SHURTLEFF



THE STUDIO OF R. M. SHURTLEFF